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IV. — *Alliteration in Latin.*¹

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THE Latin language shares with other languages a disposition to emphasize an idea by some form of repetition, as by the reduplication of the root, the iteration of the same word or words, anaphora, the *figura etymologica*, assonances in any part of a word, puns, and rhyme: but in the manifold uses of *alliteration* the Latin probably goes far beyond any other cultivated speech. Alliteration is here used in its narrowest sense, the recurrence, namely, of the same initial letter (or its phonetic equivalent) in two or more contiguous words. There are abundant indications of its existence in the popular language, and in religious and legal phraseology, even before the rise of any regular literature. It is especially prominent in the earlier writers of the Republic: it obtrudes itself with over-frequency in Ennius and Plautus, — the former often playing with it as with a newly acquired toy, the latter employing it for merely comical effects; in Terence it so far fades away as to escape observation unless it is sought for; in Lucilius, who protested against the devices and mannerisms of rhetoricians and grammarians, it is comparatively though not altogether ignored; in the fragments of Pacuvius, and, still more, of Accius, it again becomes very conspicuous; in every book of Lucretius there are hundreds of palpable instances; it again declines in the poets of the Augustan age, except in Vergil, whose verse is full of illustrations, though here as elsewhere the imperial laureate shows his exquisite taste by treating alliteration strictly as a means to higher ends. Though there

¹ Free use has been made of these works: — Naeke, *De Allitteratione Sermonis Latini*, Rhein. Mus., 1829; Maehly, *Ueber Alliteration*, Neues Schweiz. Mus., 1864; Jordan, *Beiträge zur Geschichte der latein. Sprache*, Berlin, 1879; Kvičala, *Beiträge zur Erklärung der Aeneis*, Prag, 1881; and, especially, Wölfflin, *Die Allitterierenden Verbindungen der latein. Sprache*, München, 1881.

are many cases of conscious alliteration in all the great prose writers of Rome, it can hardly be called a peculiarity of any but Cicero and Sallust, and perhaps Tacitus, and then, through a kind of renaissance, of Fronto and Apuleius. In all these writers, and in its sporadic appearance elsewhere, alliteration is found much more frequently with consonants than with vowels, and in poetry its favorite place is at the end of the verse. Thus Lucretius and Vergil are very fond of throwing the fifth and sixth feet of the hexameter into detached and alliterative words. Kvičala counts 277 instances of this movement in the Aeneid; in the fifth book of Lucretius it certainly occurs more than fifty times.

It might fairly be asked if the decline of alliteration, and its displacement in verse by rhyme,—like the displacement of quantity by accent,—have not been a loss to literature. Less obtrusive and less inevitable than rhyme, less amenable to laws of position and recurrence, very often much less mechanical, it seems to me to contribute an æsthetic enjoyment of a higher and more delicate order.

Though the word *alliteration* seems to have been invented by Pontanus in the fifteenth century, the Romans were certainly aware that the device was in use among themselves. Thus the author of the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* (iv. 12) calls it “eiusdem litterae nimia assiduitas.” Donatus remarks on the *solus Sannio servat* of Terence (Eun. 780), “Haec figura παρόμοιον dicitur.” In connection with Vergil’s *casus Cassandra canebat* (A. iii. 183) Servius says: “Haec compositio iam vitiosa est, quae maioribus placuit, ut *Anchisen agnoscit amicum* (A. iii. 82), et *sale saxa sonabant* (A. v. 866).” Significant, too, is the dictum of Martianus Capella (*De Arte Rhet.* 33): “Compositionis vitium maximum est non vitare cuiuslibet litterae assiduitatem in odium repetitam.” Spartianus, in his *Life of the Emperor Geta* (5), says: “Habebat etiam istam consuetudinem ut convivia et maxime prandia per singulas litteras iuberet scientibus servis, velut in quo erat *anser, apruna, anas*, item *pullus, perdix, pavus, porcellus, piscis, perna*, et quae in eam litteram genera edulium caderent, et item *fasianus, far-rata, ficus*, et talia.”

Those who to-day doubt, as Lachmann doubted,¹ the presence of alliteration as a characteristic in Latin diction, should in this particular compare such contemporary and fairly comparable writers as Lucretius and Catullus, Cicero and Caesar, Vergil and Horace. And it is difficult to see how any one can deny this large presence who comes upon such passages as these from representative writers:—

“O Tite tute Tati tibi tanta tyranne tulisti.” Enn. Ann.

“Africa terribili tremit horrida terra tumultu.” Ibid.

“At tuba terribili sonitu tarantara dixit.” Ibid.

“Maior mihi moles, maius miscendumst malum.” Accius, Atr.

“Non potuit paucis plura plane proloqui.” Plaut. Men. 252.

“Quanta pernis pestis veniet, quanta labes larido,
quanta sumini absumedo, quanta callo calamitas,
quanta laniis lassitudo.” Id. Capt. 900.

“Viva videns vivo sepeliri viscera busto.” Lucr. v. 993.

“Neu patriae validas in viscera vertite vires.” Verg. A. vi. 833.

“Ita sensim sine sensu aetas senescit.” Cic. de Sen. xi.

The grammarian Diomedes gives this line, which is probably a cento from the second Aeneid:—

“Machina multa minax minitatur maxima muris.”

Less on the surface than in the above extracts, but very effective and artistically very beautiful, is the alliteration in this descriptive passage from Ennius:—

“Incedunt arbusta per alta, securibus caedunt,
percellunt magnas quercus, exciditur ilex,
fraxinus frangitur atque abies consternitur alta,
pinus proceras pervertunt: omne sonabat
arbustum fremitu silvae frondosae.”

Vergil's (A. vi. 179–182) imitation of the last passage well illustrates the different management of the same peculiarity by the two poets.

Of course a distinction must be made between accidental alliteration and that which is clearly premeditated, and statistics and theories are worthless which are based upon the natural and almost unavoidable juxtaposition of alliterative

¹ *Alliteration*, in Ersch und Gruber's Encyclopädie.

words. It should be said, too, that to quite an exceptional extent the Latin contains words of the same initial letter which naturally often appear together. Among such common phrases are *virtutes vitia*, *longus latus*, *publicus privatus*, *maximus minimus*, *plebs populusque*, *populus et patres*, *doceo disco*, *toga tunica*, *victus vestisque*, *flumina fontes*, *prope procul*, *ager aedes*, *aequo animo*, *aurum argentum*, *fundo fugo*, *aes alienum*, *septem sapientes*. Caesar's "*Veni vidi vici*" (Suet. J. C. 37) seems as natural in form as it is comprehensive in content, though Plutarch (Caes. 50) appears to have noticed only its rhyme, not its alliteration. Nor does one see how Christ's description of himself (John xiv. 6) was to go into Latin except with alliteration: "*Ego sum via et veritas et vita.*"

The common impression that alliteration in Latin originated in poetry seems clearly a mistake. It is hardly to be found in the extant fragments of the oldest verse, as in the hymns of the Arval brethren and of the Salii; but it is found in many very ancient phrases and formulae of a popular and priestly and juridical character. These are some of the alliterative proverbial expressions, many of which demonstrably antedate the appearance of formal Latin poetry:—*Vivus vidensque* (Ter. Eun., Lucr. iii., Cic. Sest.), *oleum et operam perdere* (Plaut. Poen., Cic. passim), *nec vola nec vestigium* (Varro), *sex septem, acus aciaeque* (Titinius, Petron. 76), *inter os et offam* (Cato), *inter manum et mentum* (Id.), *inter sacrum saxumque* (Plaut. Capt., Apul.), *vitio vertere, semel saepius, cave canem, ad carceres a calce* (Varro, Sat., Cic. de Sen., Id. de Am.), *sine fuco ac fallaciis* (Cic. Att. i. 1), *cras credo* (Varro), *est modus matulae* (Id.), *mutuum muli scabunt* (Id.), *fortes fortuna* (Ter., Cic., et al.), *sucus et sanguis* (Cic. Br. Att. iv. 16), *sudor et sanguis* (Enn., Cic., Plin. Ep., Tac. G.), *ad restim res redit* (Caecil., Ter. Ph.), *satis superque, viva vox, a vestigio ad verticem* (Plin. N. H. vii. 77), *albus an ater, nec vas nec vestimentum* (Ter. Heaut., Cato, Sall. C.). In Aulus Gellius (xiv. 2) *vox viva* is set proverbially against *muti magistri* (books), while Cicero (de Leg. iii. 1) defines *magistratus* as *lex loquens*, and *lex* as *mutus magistratus*.

Here are some alliterative religious and legal expressions of

great antiquity: — *Di duint, felix faustum fortunatumque, sit saluus sator salva sint sata* (Cato), *ius iudiciumque, manus et mancipium, tabulae testesque, sane sarteque, purus putus* (Aul. Gell. vii. 5), *arae et altaria, tecta templa, templa tesca, per lancem liciumque, pater patratus, sacro-sanctus*. The directors of the mint were called *triumviri auro argento aeri flando feriundo* (Orelli, Insc. 569); sellers of swine guaranteed that their wares were free *a febris et a foria* (Varro, R. R. ii. 4); the praetor solemnly uttered his *do dico addico*; of the Senate it was reported *consuit consensit conscivit* (Liv. i. 32). Rome's faithful allies were called *fortes fideles* (Liv. passim), her enemies were often described as *fusi fugati*, and to her foreign envoys and public guests were assigned *loca lautia*. The traditional epithets of several divinities attest the great antiquity of alliteration; as, *Dea dia, mater matuta, bona* (once *duona*) *Dea, Venus victrix, Iuno iuga, Fors Fortuna*. Observe, also, *Venus volgivaga* (Lucr. iv.), and such combinations of gods and heroes as *Iuppiter Iuno, Vulcanus Vesta, Romulus Remus, Titus Tati, Semo Sancus, Picumnus Pilumnus*. Among the marriage divinities was a *Deus domiducus* (August. C. D. vi. 9).

Noteworthy in the cases of alliteration, amounting almost to a law in the earliest instances, is the frequency of asyndeton.

But the object of this paper is rather to present some philological aspects of alliteration than to treat it on its rhetorical or historical sides.

The argument in regard to the guttural sound of *c* before all vowels is amply confirmed by alliteration; indeed, were we without other guides as to the ancient pronunciation of this letter, this guide alone would be almost conclusive. Of abundant examples in all periods and styles, these may suffice: — *quae cava corpore caeruleo cortina receptat* (Enn.), *cava caerulea candent* (Id.), *claudus caecus mutus mancus* (Plaut. Merc.), *cito cursim* (Id. Poen.), *cedo calidum consilium cito* (Id. Mil.), *crispus crassus caesi* (Ter. Hec.), *carmina cantu concelebrare* (Lucr. v.), *cymbala circum concava* (Id. ii.), *caeca caligo* (Lucr., Verg.), *cum caedes cum civium cruor cum cinis* (Cic. pro Sulla), *caedes incendia* (Cic., Tac., passim), *certus clarus* (Ter., Cic., Hor., Liv.), *comitia consulum cum candidatis civiliter celebrans* (Tac. H. ii. 91).

Even among progressive Latinists there is some tendency to approximate the sound of *o*, in many positions, to that of *a*. The tendency seems to me to be a vicious one from every point of view, and to be against the teaching of such evidently alliterative and frequently occurring combinations as *oro obsecroque*, *ora oculique*, *oleum et operam perdere*, *opera aut otium*, *ope atque opera*. Equally valuable is the negative evidence from the apparent absence of examples of *o* and *a* in alliteration. Had the two vowels sometimes been uttered alike, we should expect to find them brought together. Thus, we do find *au* combined with *o* in the plebeian or colloquial speech; as, from Plautus, *aurum orichalcum*, *ope auxiliumque*, *aurata ornata*, *omen auspicium*. More frequently, however, *au* is found in conjunction with its first element; as, *agenda audendaque*, *alit auget*, *aluit auxit armavit* (Cic. Att. viii. 3), *auctor actor*, *adiuvant augent amant* (Plaut. Men.), *altas aëris auras* (Lucr. iii.), *attentas aures animumque* (Id. vi.), *animus atque aures avent avide* (Enn. Trag.).

The seemingly studied juxtaposition of initial *ae* and *a*, and the apparent lack of examples of *ae* and *e*, are of some weight against the theory that *ae* was pronounced like *e*, or approximately like it. Thus, *anni aetas vox vires* (Cato contra Galb.), *agere aetatem*, *agere aevum*, *aequo animo*, *aes alienum*, *ager aedes*, *aeris acervus et auri* (Hor. Ep. i. 1), *animo aegra amore saevo saucia* (Enn. Trag.). This does not affect the evidence that early among the peasants, and much later quite generally, *ae* and *e* were practically identified.

It is well known that a Latin *l* is sometimes the representative of *d*, and that *du* sometimes sank to a *b*. Having the testimony of Roman grammarians that *lacrima* was once *dacrima*, as well as the forms of the word in cognate languages, we do not hesitate to read *dacrima* in Ennius's Epitaph, which is otherwise rich in alliteration:—

“Nemo me dacrimis decoret nec funera fletu
faxit: cur? volito vivus per ora virum.”

The combinations *domi bellique* and *bona Dea* in all probability had their origin in a fondness for alliteration in the days when *belli* and *bona* were *duelli* and *duona*.

The alliterative union of vocalic and consonantal *u* has been denied, as by Wölfflin¹: but there is certainly some support for a different view, and *pro tanto* an argument for the proper pronunciation of consonantal *u*, in such expressions as *transversum unguem, ab unguibus usque ad verticem* (Cic. Rosc. Com.), *qui vobis universis et populo placent* (Ter. Ad. prol.), *utilius veru in sulco quam gravis galea in proelio* (Syrus); Horace's *quid valeant umeri* (A. P. 40) is certainly in an alliterative neighborhood, and Lucretius appears to have wished to fill with the *u* sound this line, — *ventorum validis fervescunt viribus undae* (iii. 493). It should here be borne in mind that vowels were employed alliteratively much less often than consonants.

In the sequence of alliterative words, if but one contains the vowel *a*, it usually follows, — certainly in the classical period. This principle naturally holds in prose more than in poetry, and it has been already said that in the dactylic hexameter there is a fondness for throwing the alliterative words into the last two feet of the verse. In illustration of this general rule, I give *ferro flammaque, longe lateque, colles campique, silvae saltusque* (Lucr., Verg., Tac.), *multi et magni, potus atque pastus* (Cic. Div. i. 60), *plebs patresque, mitis et mansues* (Aul. Gell. v. 14), *membra manusque, mundus magnus* (Lucr. passim), *moles magna* (Acc., Verg.), *lepidus et lautus* (Plaut., Ter.), *gloria et gratia, fundere fugare, fides fama, crispus crassus caesius* (Ter. Hec.), *video et valeo, certus clarusque, nec cor nec caput, vince et vale*.

If the words in alliteration are unequal in length, the shorter one usually precedes. Thus, *aurum argentum, acer acutus, bonus benignus, cursus certamenque* (Plin. Ep. viii. 20), *cura custodiamque* (Ibid. vii. 19, Cic. Fam. xv. 2), *gerrae germanae, ferus ferreus, fortis fidelis, vincetus verberatus, verba verbera, cor corpusque, fama fortuna, pudor pudicitia, damnum dedecus, fons fundamentum, dat dicat dedicat, nec vas nec vestimentum, vietus vetus veterinosus* (Ter. E. 688), *porro penitus penetrata* (Lucr. i.), *male monita memoria* (Caecil.), *magistratus lex est loquens, lex autem mutus magistratus* (Cic. de Leg. iii. 1).

¹ *Ueber d. allit. Verbindungen der lat. Sprache*, p. 4.

In textual criticism and in exegesis some help has been derived from alliteration, and this legitimate source is likely to be more and more resorted to. In Cicero's quotation¹ (T. D. i. 16) from some ancient poet the manuscripts differ between *falso sanguine* and *salso sanguine*. As sense and tradition hesitate between the readings, alliteration may well decide in favor of *salso*. Kvíčala² avails himself of this aid in trying to settle the text and meaning of more than three hundred places in the Aeneid, though probably very few will assent to all his conclusions. From his examples I select a few. In iv. 460, *voces* rather than *gemitus* is almost required by the alliterative context:

"Hinc exaudiri voces et verba vocantis
visa viri."

If nothing else can decide between *ciet manes* and *movet manes* (iv. 490), alliteration may pronounce for the latter. The very effective and varied repetition of sounds in vi. 683,

"Fataque fortunasque virum moresque manusque,"

seems conclusive against Peerlkamp's change of *manus* to *animos*. It has been a question from the early Roman commentators to the latest American editors³ whether, at vi. 806, Vergil wrote *virtutem extendere factis*, or, as is favored by the resulting alliteration, *virtute extendere vires*. And perhaps by Vergil's undeniable fondness for alliteration we may best explain his use of *mores* in *mores et moenia* (i. 264), where we might look for *leges* or *iura*, and his odd phrase *pubes tuorum* in *puppisque tuae pubesque tuorum* (i. 399),⁴ and his bold expression *auri aura* (vi. 204), and his puzzling employment of *secat* in *quam quisque secat spem* (x. 107).

¹ See J. Maehly, Neues Schweiz. Mus., 1864, p. 229.

² Neue Beiträge zur Erklärung der Aeneis, pp. 387-415.

³ Greenough (1881) *v. e. v*; Frieze (1883) *v. e. f*.

⁴ Quint. ix. 3. 75: "Verbum verbo non dissimile valde quaeritur."